

January 15, 2021

Dear Friends of Grant Creek,

Were you surprised to see the Jan. 13th, 2021 interview with Ken Ault as recorded in this link?: [https://www.kpax.com/news/missoula-county/progress-continues-on-new-grant-creek-apartment-complex](https://friendsofgrantcreek.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5713ce116fca84ca02a450841&id=ce0ae67630&e=814950e439)

The FOGC board was — particularly Ken Ault's comment that he wants "to keep working with the Friends of Grant Creek” regarding his development project at 2920 Expo Parkway by Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.  To the knowledge of the FOGC Board, there had been no recent effort by Ken Ault or anyone on his behalf to communicate with any neighbors or the FOGC about his project developments.  We're just this week finding out about a potential new request by Mr. Ault.

Several days ago, Mayor Engen reached out and asked four of our members if they would meet with him, Mr. Ault, his architect, and his attorney to ascertain whether representatives of FOGC or the neighborhoods would be interested in participating in discussions with Developer and his team about a new approach since City Council voted down a rezone request for the project in 2020.  The individuals agreed to do so and that meeting occurred on Tuesday, January 12th at 2:00 pm via Zoom and was attended by Bert Lindler, Karen Sippy, Wendell Beardsley, Mae Nan Ellingson, the Mayor, Ken Ault, Mike Morgan and Alan McCormick, Mr. Ault’s attorney.

At that meeting Ken Ault said he was already exploring options with his attorney and architect for a development proposal for 2920 Expo Parkway other than what is allowed under the current zoning designations.  Proceeding with a Planned Unit Development (PUD) was one option mentioned and a development agreement was another.

It was clear that the Mayor supported a PUD, given its flexibility as an option for some increased density, which the Mayor clearly favors.  He encouraged collaboration among FOGC, Ken Ault, and City Staff.  At the meeting Ken Ault said the density allowed under the current zoning as interpreted by the City does not "pencil out" economically.  Ault said he needed or wanted a density somewhere in the neighborhood of 800 units.

The Mayor’s hope in encouraging collaboration is that Ken Ault’s next proposal for the development at 2920 Expo Parkway would not result in the opposition and protest that accompanied the first request but would result in a project that everyone can live with. The Mayor offered the City’s resources to facilitate those discussions.

Grant Creek residents participating in the meeting made clear they could not commit FOGC to participate in such collaboration and suggested that Ken Ault present his new proposal to the residents of Grant Creek.  The Mayor supported this idea and also a presentation to the Grant Creek Neighborhood Council.  We don't want to schedule two similar meetings unnecessarily, so the Board will be letting members of FOGC know when the Neighborhood Council meeting is scheduled.  We will be sure to have a general membership meeting before that to provide some background about this issue and other ongoing projects.

The four Grant Creek residents attending the Mayor's meeting this week thought that it might be possible the PUD process could result in a better development at 2920 Expo Parkway.  Ken Ault's rhetoric since then in the newscast linked above would seem to cast doubt on that, as would his renewed demand for 900 units.  Just two days earlier during the Mayor's meeting, he said he would need 800 units.  On Feb. 15th a year ago, he told the Grant Creek Neighborhood Council he would be requesting 930 units.  So, although the name of the rezoning request being sought may change, the number of units may not.

There is still much to be learned.  We will post pertinent information on the FOGC website and Facebook page regarding the planned unit developments and the dates of upcoming meetings.

Thank you,

Friends of Grant Creek Board of Directors:
Wendell Beardsley

Kim Birck

Kevin Davis

Andrea Felton

John Langstaff

Bert Lindler

Dodie Moquin

Erin Nuzzo

Karen Sippy